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The President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering calls on Israel to pursue a two-state solution in the Middle East

Following the inauguration speech of new Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, yesterday before the Knesset, the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering said:

"I welcome the explicit commitment of the new Israeli government to a lasting peace solution in the Middle East and its readiness to relaunch peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. I encourage Israel to implement such political will without delay.

Economy and security, although they are important, are not the only parameters to be taken into consideration and they cannot replace a lasting political solution. There is no viable peace solution without dignity since the dignity of an Israeli is exactly the same as the dignity of a Palestinian.

Israel is member of the international community and the Government of Israel committed itself to a comprehensive peace process that aims at the swift establishment of a two-state-solution, a State of Israel in safe and internationally-recognised borders that peacefully coexists with a free, sovereign, democratic and viable State of Palestine on its own internationally-recognised territory. I strongly urge the new Government of Israel to stand up to these commitments and ensure international and European Union support for that purpose. Israel must put to an end to the closures, check-points and border-crossings, both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip in order to alleviate the suffering of the people and to allow economic recovery. At the same time it must be prevented that Hamas rearms.

Comprehensive peace starts with confidence-building measures on the ground in order to foster the necessary mutual understanding between communities. In this sense I regret the recent decision of the Palestinian authorities in Jenin, West Bank, to suspend the "Strings of Freedom Youth-Orchestra" after they had performed for holocaust survivors in Israel."

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